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## The Book of Games: Strategy, Tactics and History (Review)

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# Reference Books Bulletin

## Adult Reference

### **The Book of Games: Strategy, Tactics & History.**

**By Jack Botermans.**

2008. 736p. illus. Sterling, \$29.95 (9781402742217). 794.

Some 65 international games are described and demonstrated in this colorful book. Ranging from dominoes to mancala and shogi to Yut, each entry highlights the game's origins, versions, and playing rules. Additionally, culture and history are explored through games, as in the entry for "The Royal Game of Ur," one of the oldest board games ever found. Color illustrations and diagrams are used liberally to illustrate strategic moves and the variations of game boards and pieces, while photographs show the games being played.

The index lists the games, with subheadings for *history*, *moving pieces*, *opening moves*, etc., but does not index all of the volume's content. A geographic index, time line, and world map showing the development of games would have made this a much more useful reference source. However, the illustrations and histories make for interesting browsing and reading. Libraries should consider this for their circulating collections. —*Sue Polanka*

### **Cambridge Illustrated Dictionary of Astronomy.**

**By Jacqueline Mitton.**

2008. 397p. illus. Cambridge, \$35 (9780521823647). 520.3.

Authored by a professional astronomer and writer, this volume readily fills the need for an astronomy dictionary. Coverage encompasses named astronomical objects, terms and abbreviations most frequently encountered in astronomy, constellations, principal observatories, space missions, and biographical sketches for 70 well-known individuals in the history of the field.

Written at a level accessible to the general reader, the 1,300 alphabetically arranged entries range in length from one sentence (simple definitions) to several paragraphs (entries on planets). Specialist terms and acronyms are clearly explained. Sample entries include *Air shower*, *719 Albert*, *Astronomer Royal*, *Degenerate star*, *Egg Nebula*, *Hertzsprung-Russell diagram*, *Hooker telescope*, *Kepler's laws*, *Penumbra*, and *Yerkes Observatory*. Many up-to-date finds are included; for example, we learn that legislation has been enacted in parts of the U.S. to protect important observatory sites from the damaging effects of unnecessary lighting in nearby cities; the highest quasar redshift measured by 2007 was 6.43; Pluto

is no longer categorized as a major planet. About 300 excellent color photographs and illustrations, unusual for a moderately priced dictionary, supplement the text. Among them are 20 new star maps by distinguished illustrator Wil Tirion and photographs from various space missions and the Hubble Space Telescope. Ample *see* and *see also* references guide the reader from one topic to another; references to related dictionary entries are highlighted in color.

*Cambridge Illustrated Dictionary of Astronomy*, notable for authoritative, up-to-date definitions supplemented by color illustrations and photographs, is highly recommended for high-school, academic, special, and public libraries. —*Nancy Cannon*

**YA/C:** *The illustrations and writing style should make this handy volume appealing to high-school students. MEQ.*

### **Dictionary of Genocide.**

**By Samuel Totten and Paul R. Bartrop.**

2v. 2008. 534p. Greenwood, \$199.95 (9780313329678). 304.6.

In a wide-ranging resource, two experts in the evolving field of genocide studies define 600 terms, persons, and events. They look at the many ways in which cultures, nations, and regions have eliminated or subjugated other groups, since the beginning of time, on all continents. They describe the actions themselves, the way history has recorded them, and the steps taken to prevent or redress the tragedies, both past and future. Their goal is to be the first port of call for students and experts as a dictionary, not a more in-depth encyclopedia.

Entries for terms such as *Cultural genocide*, *Dark tourism*, and *Gendecide* broaden the user's understanding. Many entries on the killings in Rwanda and the Balkans provide various ways to consider the regions. Entries on the complexity of Iraq, references in a few articles to 2007, and balanced writing on the shortcomings of the past UN Secretary General bring the work up to date. Information—such as that on an Australian official who maltreated Aborigines; the Swiss refusal to allow refugees from Nazi Germany; and STAND, the student organization on the Darfur tragedy—is accurate. Most entries are one paragraph, but some are shorter or longer, depending on the need, such as two pages on *Gacaca*, a form of local justice in Rwanda. There are no cross-references but some *see* references.

The list of entries at the beginning, a comprehensive subject bibliography, and an accurate, detailed index will be helpful to users. The three-volume *Encyclopedia of Genocide and Crimes against Humanity* (2004) is an encompassing resource, but the current work

pinpoints more concisely terms, persons, and events. It will fill an important niche in public and academic libraries for students and experts. This title is also available as an e-book. —*Arthur Meyers*

### **Encyclopedia of American Literature.**

**By Susan Clair Imbaratto and others.**

4v. 2008. 2,000p. illus. Facts On File, \$375 (9780816064762). 810.

This is a thorough revision of Facts On File's three-volume set of the same title published in 2002. Volumes in the first edition covered the years 1607–1814, 1815–1914, and 1915 to the present. The revised edition's four volumes cover the years 1607–1815, 1816–1895, 1896–1945, and 1946 to the present. Main entries for writers occur in the volume chronologically appropriate to the publication of their first major work. A broad view of American literature is taken throughout, especially in volume 1, which includes entries on pre-1607 explorers and writers including Columbus and Cabeza de Vaca as well as the seventeenth-century Mexican poet and playwright Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. There are approximately 1,000 new entries and "more than 300 new black-and-white illustrations" as well as revisions and additions to existing entries, according to the publisher's press release. "The majority of the new entries are on works of literature, with a particular emphasis on those most read by high-school and college students," it adds. Entries cover writers; major works, movements, periods, genres, and styles; periodicals and publishers; and other topics (for example, *The Center for Editions of American Authors*, *PEN/Faulkner Award*, *Vietnam War*).

Entries range from a paragraph to, for major authors, several pages. The great majority of entries conclude with a list of sources. A minority of author entries includes a list of works, with publishers and first publication dates. Most author entries begin with a quotation. Entries on the most important writers—those most likely to be studied in high schools and universities—conclude with a guide to studying the writer's works. A highlight is the frequent inclusion of book covers, photographic and other portraits, manuscript pages, and other illustrations. Each volume has a selected bibliography and index to that volume as well as a cumulative list of entries. Volume 4 also has a cumulative index.

With entries that are well written and well researched throughout, the encyclopedia is recommended for high-school, public, and academic libraries. The four-volume *Oxford Encyclopedia of American Literature* (2004) achieves depth of coverage on the core authors but has only 350 essays. Well-regarded